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## ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS



### WITH THE MAINE TO SOUTH AFRICA \*

By M. EUGÉNIE HIBBARD

Late Superintending Sister American Hospital Ship Maine

(Continued from page 400)

MOOI RIVER FIELD HOSPITAL, NATAL, *February 21, 1900.*—About a quarter of a mile to our left, rising from the river, is a line of low kopjes (hills). To one in particular my attention is called, as in the early days of the war a Boer gun held the position of honor on the ridge. It had been brought here for the purpose of shelling the railroad bridge crossing the Mooi River at this point, which if successful would have cut the line of communication with Durban on the coast. Fortunately for the British cause, these efforts proved futile, and the Boers withdrew after looting the various farmhouses in the vicinity and driving before them several ox-wagons filled with household effects. There, as at Newcastle and Dundee, all in Natal, tales are told of looting, plunder, and wanton destruction,—acts committed by a people whose peculiar boast is marred by such inconsistencies. Now, partially concealed by shrubbery, on the same spot a British gun is monarch of all we survey.

At this elevation (five thousand feet above sea level) the atmosphere is the purest found in South Africa. The days, though hot during the mid-day hours, are at other times delightfully cool, and the nights almost cold. Owing to the clear atmosphere sounds from a distance are

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easily transmitted, and I could distinctly hear the peculiar call of the Kaffir to his yoke of oxen (sometimes eight in number and often thirty) at the farms on the hillsides, and the drowsy hum of insect life on the veldt around us filled the air, successfully removing the impression that we are so near the fighting-line, making the association almost impossible, when a portentous sound broke upon the air, unlike any other, save that of the sunset gun, again and again regularly repeated, each time clearer and more defined, and I am told "The artillery guns are speaking at the Tugela," and we know that General Buller is making his fourth and we hope his final advance for the relief of Ladysmith. The firing continued throughout the afternoon, which I spent in visiting the wards of the hospital and officers' quarters, containing altogether between seven and eight hundred patients, the majority seriously ill. In the distribution of the work I found one nursing "sister" had been assigned to ten wards, each containing six cots, making a total of sixty patients—a large and impossible number for one nurse to even supervise. When will the Medical Department fully realize the responsibilities that fall to it in time of war? This hospital, though apparently fully equipped in other respects, feels keenly the policy pursued at *home* of restricting the number of "sisters," assigning so small a proportion to acute cases, handicapping the service, and sacrificing the soldier to an ignorance of conditions which, though possibly unforeseen, should have been quickly appreciated and promptly corrected. History, repeating herself, should teach us lessons not so easily forgotten. Nature is a most exacting mistress, and under morbid conditions demands servile homage.

The feeling of sympathy exhibited in the material form of equipping and maintaining a hospital ship for a number of months in the South African service by the American ladies in London is greatly appreciated here. Colonel Cleary, P. M. O., expressed the wish that his brother, General Cleary (who was wounded at the first battle of Colenso, the same time that General Buller was also slightly wounded), would come to the Maine to recuperate. When I saw General Cleary later he spoke so kindly of our work that I was tempted to urge Colonel Cleary's suggestion, but the soldier spirit was too strong within him, and he said he would not like to be removed so far from the fighting-line.\*

The officers at this hospital are accommodated in the hotel, which was commandeered for the purpose. There are between forty-five and fifty officers, heroes every one, who have suffered as the men under them suffered in the battles of Colenso, Spion Kop, and Vaalkranz. All bar-

\* General Cleary later joined his command.



MARKET-PLACE, DURBAN, NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

riers are now broken down, and the condition of these men fills our hearts with the sympathy that forces the tears into our eyes as we see the physical wrecks they have become, and fully realize that some of them will never see home (England) again. Here, as elsewhere, I found the English army "sister" held in great respect by the men. A sergeant-major said to me one day, "But our 'sisters' rank as officers;" being conscious of this, he felt the dignity reflected honorably upon himself. The devotion of the "sisters" here is worthy indeed of notice. With a very small proportion of assistants and many responsibilities, they worked faithfully through the long days and weary nights, evoking a feeling of gratitude in their patients.

Impressed forcibly by the terrible results of war, I left Mooi River Field Hospital with mixed feelings of awe, admiration, and regret that I personally could not help in the great work of the sisters in encouraging and comforting the patients under their care.

Bidding good-by to the hospital, lying white on the hillside, without shade or shadow, save the invisible shadow of death hovering constantly over it, I turned my face homeward, leaving on the twelve-thirty train (midnight), *the only woman passenger*.

During the dark hours we passed through the least interesting part of Natal, but when the sun rose the scenery was gorgeous, all tints of flower and foliage blending to make one perfect whole. As we were now constantly descending, the country opened out before me more rapidly, and the road being circuitous, the second and third glimpse of some beautiful spot was secured. Large herds of Madagascar cattle added much to the picturesqueness. The Victoria palm stands out distinctly against the morning sky, and the heavier foliage of the smaller trees and shrubs forms an excellent background for the brilliantly colored flowers.

I arrived at seven-thirty this morning, February 22, 1900, reaching the Maine about eight o'clock. Doctors Rodman and Hastings returned the night previous from the front, having gone as far as the hill of Monte Cristo. Major Cabell, the American medical officer in command, left us to-day, sailing for England on the Garth Castle en route for America, his leave of absence from Washington having nearly expired. Richard Harding Davis came on board this afternoon, and Doctor Prince (American consul), with his wife and daughter, were also on board for afternoon tea.

*Friday, February 23, 1900.*—Fifteen men were returned to the front, or, rather, to the base hospital at Pietermaritzburg, to-day. Lady Randolph Churchill and Miss Eleanore Warrender left this afternoon to spend the night on H. M. S. *Terrible*. During the evening we re-

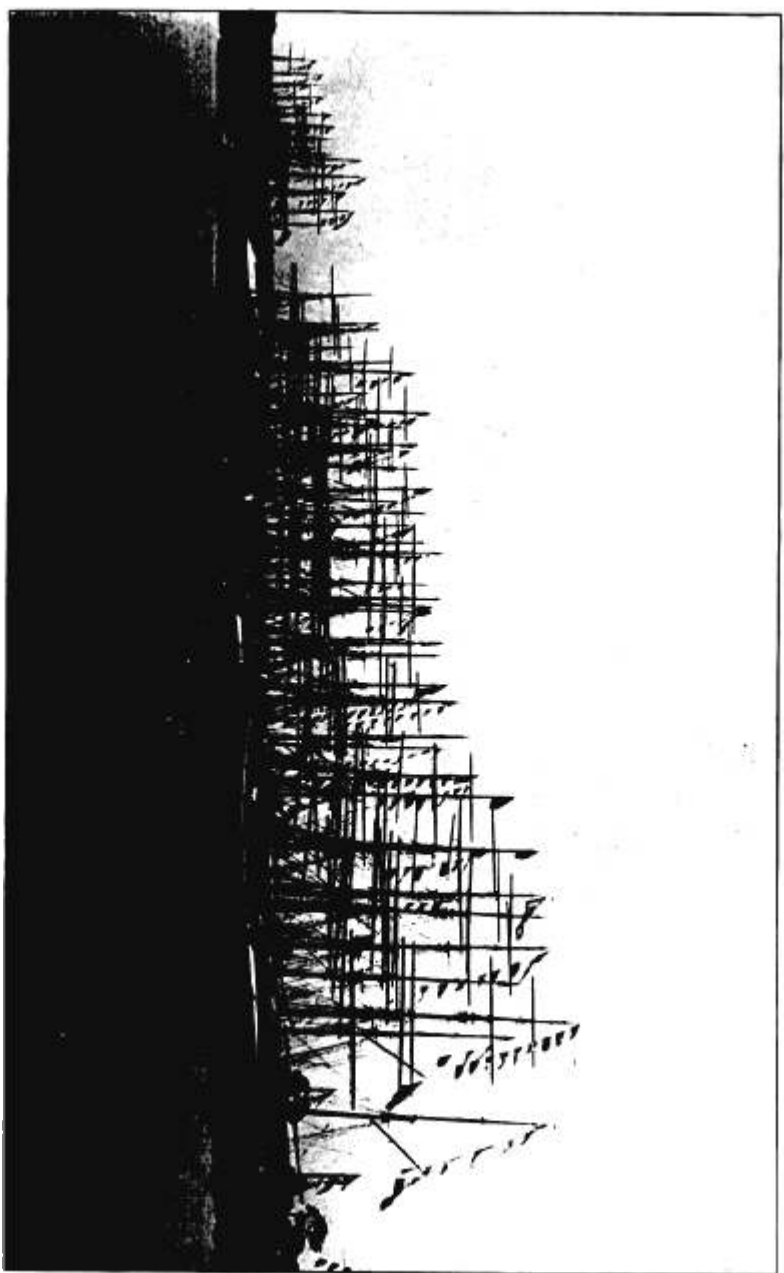
ceived a signal message which read, "Cronje captured with eight thousand men," causing great enthusiasm and rejoicing.

*Saturday, February 24.*—Reported capture of Cronje not confirmed, consequently great disappointment.

*Wednesday, February 28, Majuba Day.*—To-day official news of Cronje's surrender was received, and great credit was given to the Canadian regiments. Good news has a wonderful effect, and we all feel that now the back-bone of the war is broken. During the evening the display of fireworks was very fine. Several of the male nurses returned from the front to-day. They had seen the engagement on Geobler's Kloof, had seen the shells flying, and heard the demoralizing rattle of the pompons. Strange to say, during the shell-fire they had seen a farmer quietly guiding his yoke of oxen to and fro through the ploughed ground, apparently conscious of the fact that his proximity to the guns prevented any molestation by them. The peculiar feature of the railroad beyond Colenso is the engine, covered entirely with manila rope (to prevent accidents from flying shrapnel, etc.), consequently presenting a most unusual appearance and named "Hairy Mary," a most uncomely looking object. Doctors Weber and Dodge left this afternoon for a view of the interior. Concert on board this afternoon.

*Thursday, March 1, 1900.*—The four "sisters" went ashore early this morning for a trip into the country. Twenty-four convalescent patients were ordered to the front while on deck waiting for the usual inspection preceding discharge. A certain amount of excitement prevailed on the signal officer reporting an order received from the gun-boats, "Prepare to dress ship." Immediately the sailors prepared long strings of bunting, using all signal-flags for the purpose. Hardly had this been accomplished when the general order came from head-quarters, "*Dress ship. Relief of Ladysmith.*" A thousand or more flags unfurled at a given moment on the numerous vessels in the harbor instantaneously produced a scene worthy of such good news, and the cannon poured forth their unbounded delight with continuous roar for what gun, cannon, shot, and shell had accomplished, almost drowning the ringing cheers of the sailors, given with hearty good-will, for the valiant men who had secured through supreme effort, after one hundred and eighteen days, *the relief of Ladysmith.*

All honor is due both besiegers and besieged, but to-day let us rejoice that the victory is on the side of those who have suffered all the horrors of isolation and untold privation, with the impending fear of the possible failure of the relief column, making the situation a desperate one, and thank the God of Battles for this deliverance. . . .



FLEET OF SAILING-VESSELS DECORATED FOR THE RELIEF OF LADYSMITH

The town is gayly decorated, to-day is declared a general holiday, and to-morrow is to be observed as a day of thanksgiving and special demonstration. Rain falling heavily this evening spoiled the effect of the fireworks and illuminations, that would otherwise have been most brilliant. Yesterday closed on the final accomplishment of one of the most difficult tasks assigned to a British general during this war. All doubts are now set at rest, and nothing but *success* rings in our ears. The tremendous strain the empire has been under is now partially relieved, and anxiety is turned into joy.

*Friday, March 2.*—Fifty-three patients came on board to-day.

*Saturday, March 3.*—Four sick officers arrived to-day. A regatta was held this afternoon in the harbor. On Captain Stone's invitation, Sister Sara, Captain Sandbach, and myself watched it from the ship's launch. We also cruised around.

*Sunday, March 4.*—Service was held on deck this morning, the Bishop of Pretoria officiating. Sir Walter Hely Hutchinson, Governor of Natal, and Captain Percy Scott, of H. M. S. *Terrible*, were on board to lunch, afterwards visiting the wards. Mr. Winston Churchill also spent the day on board.

*Wednesday, March 7.*—Twenty-eight men returned to duty this morning. An officer who inspected them before departure declared them to be "A fit lot of men." It is a great satisfaction to know that the time they have spent on board the *Maine* has been beneficial.

Two "sisters" (nursing) attached to the hospital train sent out by H. R. H. Princess Christian visited our hospital to-day. One of the "sisters" had visited the ship when in the West Indian Dock, London, and after her visit to-day she expressed herself as highly pleased with the improved appearance of the ship, and acknowledged a feeling of disappointment on her first visit, which was under other conditions and in another clime.

*Thursday, March 8.*—The crew belonging to H. M. S. *Powerful*, who have been besieged in Ladysmith, arrived in Durban to-day. In the early stages of the war they had brought the naval guns to bear upon the enemy, and shared later the fate of the besieged. Great demonstrations were made in their honor, a procession accompanying them from train to ship, where they embarked to join their comrades. Weary, worn, and hunger-stamped, they pass before my mind's eye, a silent procession.

Captain Bentinck, an invalided officer, gave me some interesting details regarding the army "sisters," their usefulness, requirements, and existing conditions, the same ground on which we trod during the Spanish-American War.

This has been the hottest day we have had, and the night bids fair to rival it.

*Friday, March 9.*—The night was extremely hot. To-day three wounded officers arrived. Concert on board this afternoon. Preparations are being made to leave Durban, whether to return to England or merely to take patients to Cape Town has not yet been decided.

*March 17.*—After several days of work, above-deck and below, both fore and aft, in cabin and in wards, we left Durban, Natal, with one hundred and sixty-five patients on board. Many exchanges had been made previous to our sailing, as only what were considered disabled men, or men invalided home, were assigned to our ship. Great demonstrations were made in our honor on our departure by the vessels in the harbor as we moved slowly through the Inner to the Outer Anchorage, where H. M. S. *Terrible* was manned and many hearty cheers were given for "*The American hospital ship Maine.*"

One of the East Indian transports heaved her anchor, steamed across our bow and around us, giving the final send-off.

(To be continued.)

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## THE EVOLUTION OF THE TRAINED NURSE \*

By E. D. FERGUSON, M.D.

Surgeon to the Samaritan Hospital, Troy, New York

(Concluded)

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE derived her baptismal name from the fact of her birth in Florence, which occurred in 1820. Her early life was that of the English girl born into a comfortable home. She followed the methods of education and had the advantages of travel appropriate to her time and class, but much of her girlhood was passed where her walks and drives must have brought to her attention the many hardships incident to the lives of the very poor. It was fortunate for humanity at large that the bent of her mind was in the direction of the practical consideration of the problems constantly presented in her daily life.

It is quite probable that several cases of serious illness in her family may have determined the special course which she would pursue, but in whatever way it came about, she finally concluded to give her attention to hospital nursing, so that early in her womanhood we find her visiting

\* Address delivered at the opening of the Nurses' Home of the Samaritan Hospital, Troy, New York.